

the good stuff  
store

# County board drain-DPW merger decision due today

By TIM RICHARD

Oakland County could save \$197,800 a month immediately and \$27,800 each year in the future by combining the office of the drain commissioner and the public works department, says George W. Kuhn.

Kuhn, currently the elected drain commissioner, gave these estimates last week to the finance committee of the county board of commissioners, which is pondering whether to make the merger.

The board was scheduled to make a final decision today. It can either consolidate the two offices under the leadership of a public works commissioner who would stand for election in fall, or it can follow the advice of County Executive Daniel J. Murphy and shift the department to his control.

The DPW has been a bone of contention since the county lost its power to fund public works. The state law under which Oakland set up Michigan's first county executive abolished the board of public works, and so the DPW must be reorganized and placed in a new administrative home.

KUHN VIZUALIZES a two-step process for consolidating the DPW and drain office: a first phase of 30-60 days and a second phase to take effect during the next fiscal year.

Phase 1, he said, would save \$197,800 with these steps:

- Combine the two department directorships—\$20,000
- Avoid replacing the DPW's sewer director—\$27,800

- Combine the two offices' right-of-way negotiations, eliminating two out of the approximately 15 positions through better scheduling—\$22,800

- Cut the drain office's use of separate legal counsel by use of county civil counsel—\$28,000

- Consolidate and create staffs and expenditures—\$5,000

- Adjust solid waste budget—\$20,000

- Apply to the DPW those overtime contracts developed in the drain office—\$20,000

Since DPW has been spending \$200,000 a year on overtime through waste contracts, he said, an immediate saving of 30 per cent is possible.

PHASE II would follow a detailed review of all work activities, but Kuhn believes "a gradual consolidation of various line functions such as maintenance crew, construction inspectors, etc."

Additional savings could total \$20,000, he said, and include:

- Consolidating maintenance and construction inspectors—\$20,000
- Further refinement of staff effectiveness—\$10,000

- Extended savings on overtime policy—\$20,000
- Greater flexibility among employees—\$10,000

KUHN HAS MADE no secret of his desire to head the operation as public works commissioner.

A conservative Republican, he runs the risk of being turned down by a county board with a 16-12 majority of Democrats. The county board would make the initial appointment until an election can be held.

But Kuhn contends it's more important to consolidate the functions and save money than to worry about the political fortunes of himself or fellow Republican Dan Murphy.

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## Legislature moves on anti-smoking bills

Anti-smoking bills advanced on two fronts last week in the Michigan Legislature.

A bill to restrict smoking in restaurants passed the state Senate 20-7 but was denounced by its own sponsor, Sen. Jack Faxon (D-Detroit), because of an amendment that would require patrons to ask for non-smoking areas before the restaurateur would be required to provide them.

Backing the amended final version were Sens. Donald Bishop (R-Norchester), Bill Huffman (D-Madison Heights) and Carl Parnell (R-Hyde Park). Absent was Sen. Daniel Cooper (D-Clark Park).

Sen. William Faust (D-Westland) joined Faxon in opposition. The Senate Journal recorded Faust as supporting it, but Faust said the roll call is in error for that day.

The bill requires food service establishments with a capacity of 30 or more seats to designate a non-smoking area (size unspecified) upon the request of a patron.

The house gave 12-3 approval to a bill

that would ban smoking in retail food stores. The vote was on concurrence in minor senate amendments. The bill goes to Gov. William Milliken for his signature.

Sponsor was Rep. John Markes (D-Westland).

Supporters included all Observer & Excelsior area representatives except State Rep. Ruth McNamee (R-Birmingham), who was absent for the final vote.

The senate amendment lifts liability from a store owner if he posts "No Smoking" signs that are ignored by a customer.

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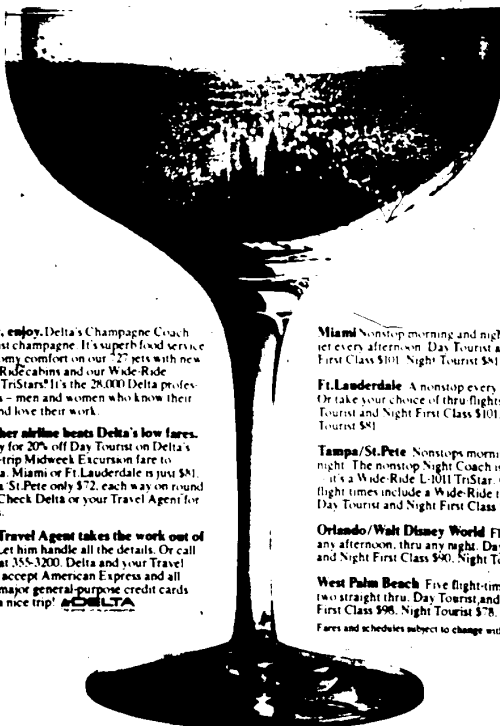
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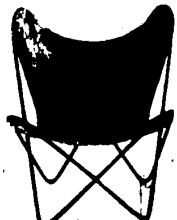
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